

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 1-10, 12- 27 and 29-47 and amend Claims 11 and 28 as follows:

1-10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) ~~A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 10;~~ A method of evaluating an educational program, comprising the steps of:

- a) developing criteria which address strengths and weaknesses of the educational program;
- b) observing the criteria in the educational program;
- c) assigning a numerical value to the criteria; and,
- d) assigning an overall rating to the educational program based on the numerically valued criteria;

wherein the criteria for an early child care education program are classroom environment, accreditation of the educational program, parent involvement, staff credentials, presence of a curriculum, and staff to child ratios;

wherein the observation of the parent involvement criteria analyzes what levels and types of parent involvement exist by evaluating factors reflecting basic communication and responsibleness of the parents associated with the educational program; and

wherein the factors reflecting basic communication and responsibleness of the parents associated with the educational program consist of:

program documents providing written information on the educational program's philosophy, policies and procedures;

program documents orientation to the program for both parent and child prior to or immediately following enrollment;

program reports timely notification of major change in program of policies and a low percentage of parents report lack of timely notification;

25 a high percentage of parents report that program welcomes visits by parent at all times;

a high percentage of parents report at least adequate information from program on child's physical and emotional well-being;

a high percentage of parents report at least adequate response by program to parent concerns and suggestions;

30 a high percentage of parents report at least adequate information from program on child's daily activities;

a high percentage of parents report being somewhat comfortable asking teacher for information on child development or parenting techniques;

35 program documents conducting planned individual parent conferences at least annually to discuss child's progress and plans to meet learning goals;

a high percentage of parents report receiving at least adequate information from program on learning ~~foats~~ goals for children and teaching approaches;

40 a majority of parents who have offered ideas or suggestions to program report that suggestions are implemented;

a high percentage of parents report receiving at least adequate information from the program about community services;

45 program documents regularly including parents in program evaluation; and,

program staff and parents report planned, successful activities in parent involvement such as parenting, communication, participating or volunteering, learning at home, leadership or decision-making, and community involvement.

12-27. (Canceled)

28. (Currently Amended) ~~A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 27, A method of evaluating an educational program, comprising the steps of:~~

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a) developing criteria which address the strengths and weaknesses of the educational program;

b) observing factors in the educational programs, said factors being related to one or more of the criteria;

c) assigning a numerical value to the factors;

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d) sorting the factors to correspond with the one or more criteria to which the factors relate;

e) averaging the numerical values of the factors to give a numerical value for each criteria; and,

f) assigning an overall rating to the educational program based on the numerically valued criteria;

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wherein the criteria for an early child care education program are classroom environment, accreditation of the educational program, parent involvement, staff credentials, presence of a curriculum, and staff to child ratios;

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wherein the observation of the parent involvement criteria analyzes what levels and types of parent involvement exist by evaluating factors reflecting basic communication and responsibleness of the parents associated with the educational program; and

wherein the factors reflecting basic communication and responsibleness of the parents associated with the educational program consist of:

program documents providing written information on the educational program's philosophy, policies and procedures;

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program documents orientation to the program for both parent and child prior to or immediately following enrollment;

program reports timely notification of major change in program of policies and a low percentage of parents report lack of timely notification;

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a high percentage of parents report that program welcomes visits by parent at all times;

a high percentage of parents report at least adequate information from program on child's physical and emotional well-being;

a high percentage of parents report at least adequate response by program to parent concerns and suggestions;

35 a high percentage of parents report at least adequate information from program on child's daily activities;

a high percentage of parents report being somewhat comfortable asking teacher for information on child development or parenting techniques;

40 program documents conducting planned individual parent conferences at least annually to discuss child's progress and plans to meet learning goals;

a high percentage of parents report receiving at least adequate information from program on learning ~~foals~~ goals for children and teaching approaches;

a majority of parents who have offered ideas or suggestions to program report that suggestions are implemented;

45 a high percentage of parents report receiving at least adequate information from the program about community services;

program documents regularly including parents in program evaluation; and,

50 program staff and parents report planned, successful activities in parent involvement such as parenting, communication, participating or volunteering, learning at home, leadership or decision-making, and community involvement.

29-47. (Canceled)

Please add new claims 48-67 as follows:

48. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the overall rating is computed by averaging the numerically valued criteria.

49. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the overall rating is computed by weighting the numerically valued criteria and averaging the weighted values.

50. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the overall rating comprises a four-star system, with one star or less representing the lowest rating and four stars representing the highest rating.

51. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

placing the criteria of step (a) in an electronic database;

entering said numerical values into the database; and,

5 calculating, within the database, the overall rating of the educational program.

52. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the observation step includes collecting documents, classroom observations, interviews with personnel of the educational program, review of credentials of personnel of the educational program, interviews with the students and parents patronizing the educational program, surveys, and other information gathering techniques.

53. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the observation of the classroom environment criteria includes observing space and furnishings, personal care routines, language activities, reasoning activities, language materials, reasoning materials, program structure, physical activities, interaction between staff and children, interactions between parents and staff.

54. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the observation of the accreditation criteria includes an analysis of whether the educational program is accredited by appropriate state, local or federal institutions.

55. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the overall rating comprises a four-star system, with one star or less representing the lowest rating and four stars representing the highest rating.

56. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, further comprising the steps of:

placing the criteria of step (a) and factors in an electronic database;

entering said numerical values into the database; and,

5 calculating, within the database, the overall rating of the educational program.

57. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the observation step includes collecting documents, classroom observations, interviews with personnel of the educational program, review of credentials of personnel of the educational program, interviews with the students and parents patronizing the educational
5 program, surveys, and other information gathering techniques.

58. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the observation of the classroom environment criteria includes observing space and furnishings, personal care routines, language activities, reasoning activities, language materials, reasoning materials, program structure, physical activities, interaction between
5 staff and children, interactions between parents and staff.

59. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the observation of the accreditation criteria includes an analysis of whether the educational program is accredited by appropriate state, local or federal institutions.

60. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the observation of the staff credentials criteria includes an analysis of the credentials of each staff member.

61. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the observation of the staff to child ratios includes an analysis of whether the educational program meets target ratios of staff to child based on age groups.

62. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 0 to 18 months of age ranges at the low end, from 1 staff person to 5 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 3 children.

63. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 18 to 24 months of age ranges at the low end, from 1 staff person to 5 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 3 children.

64. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 24 to 36 months of age ranges at the low end, from 1 staff person to 7 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 5 children.

65. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 30 to 36 months of age ranges at the low end, from 1 staff person to 8 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 6 children.

66. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 36 to 48 months of age ranges at the low end, from 1 staff person to 10 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 8 children.

67. (New) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 48 to 60 months of age ranges at the low end, from 1 staff person to 12 children to, at the high end, from 1 staff person to 8 children.
